

Bob's Bi-weekly Blog--March 19th, 2007

Hello Everyone, I am going to start a practice of writing a "*blog*" or newsletter at least once every two weeks, and sometimes more often, to let you know what is going on as we work toward the creation of the new Department of Safety and Inspections. We have come a "loong" way since April of 2006, when the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Code Enforcement began to meet.

I believe that we have made amazing progress and I want to increase communicating with you and our stakeholders about what is being planned and discussed to keep us moving forward. In many respects the creation of a new department is an iterative process that requires strong feedback and a thorough discussion of ideas before good decisions can be made.

In addition to this regular report we are going to look for other ways to increase communication including meetings, email, and even video clips. I am asking Don Cheney to put these reports on the Intranet for easy reference. <http://spnet.ci.stpaul.mn.us/liep-priv/> so we will have access for future reference.

If you have any questions about what is happening; or want to share some ideas and suggestions with me, please let me know via a quick email or by stopping in on Monday mornings from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. I will have open office hours on Mondays at 9:00 so anyone can stop in and let me know what's on your mind. No need for an appointment, just check my calendar in GroupWise, to make sure I am here, and then stop by my office. The door is generally open and I am always glad to see you.

AFSCME Labor Management Committee (LMC)

The AFSCME Labor Management committee is up and running after several meetings for training and the development of a mission, by laws, etc. The LMC will address issues resulting from the new department that affect AFSCME members. Of course the logical question is why just AFSCME on the Labor Management Committee since we have many, many other bargaining units in the new department? The answer is because AFSCME represents the majority of DSI employees and many of the changes that that will be considered will affect AFSCME personnel.

The membership on the committee from management includes; Christine Rozek (co-chair), Dick Lippert, Seve Zaccard, Robert Humphrey, Pat McGinn and Sheila Williams from Human Resources. (Alternatives include Wendy Lane and Sandy Schmokel). Labor membership includes: John Hardwick (co-chair), John Klemaseski, Marcy Schillinger, Maxine Linston, Dave Bergmann, Chris Cowan, Jean LaClare, and Joe Yannarely.

DSI Strategic Planning Process

We are very fortunate to have the services of LeeAnn Turchin from Human Resources to facilitate the strategic planning process for the creation of DSI. The first thing that LeeAnn has done is to help us restructure the various groups that we will use to create DSI. She has also suggested some changes to the meeting schedules for our other functioning groups. The large DSI Management Team will be meeting only twice a month, (the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays) and the even larger Transition Team will be restructured into a smaller group once the initial draft of the strategic plan is complete, hopefully in about six weeks.

Lee Ann will be sharing all the details of the strategic planning process with all employees through a series of meetings or "focus groups" with all the sections of the new department. Check the email from Robert Humphrey. The meetings will take place between March 21st and April 5th.

New Fire Certificate of Occupancy Program

The new Fire Certificate of Occupancy Program became effective on March 7th and we have quickly acted to implement this new program. More than 6,000 invoices were mailed on the 8th and 9th of March, and the Fire Inspectors have already started inspecting properties. This new program is a huge challenge to everyone involved and I want to recognize and thank the information and Complaint staff at Code Enforcement (Maxine Linston, Deborah Wiley, Amber Sullivan, Joe Hatch and Debra Jackson) for handling the many phone calls that we received, and continue to receive, from property owners. I also want to recognize Maynard Vinge and Jean LaClare for their work in handling the glitches and the more difficult questions and Paul Hogrefe and Don Cheney for orchestrating and implementing the data conversion for the Fire C of O program.

There are many others who are working to make this new program a success, especially of course, Steve Zaccard and his inspectors. I want you all to know that I am impressed by your willingness to do whatever it takes to get the program going. Thank you everyone for your good work.

Minneapolis and St. Paul Home Tour—April 28th and 29th.

We are partnering with the Neighborhood Development Alliance on the West Side to staff the newly remodeled, formerly vacant, single family home at 394 E. Sidney. As in the past we are looking for volunteers to work a two hour shift at the home. This is an excellent way for us to provide information on our programs and for employees from different sections to get to know each other. I'll be there, I encourage you to volunteer for a two hour shift.

Vacant Building Initiative

The new promotions and moves in support of the Vacant Building Initiative have been in place for two weeks and the dust is finally starting to settle. I know that some of the changes have been difficult and once again, I appreciate what staff are doing to make our new approach to vacant buildings a success. I also value very highly the planning that Dick Lippert and Steve Magner have done to develop the initiative, but as always, the success of the overall effort depends on the hard work of all the vacant building staff including: Matt Dornfeld, Rich Singerhouse, Mike Kalis, Dennis Senty, Dave Nelmark, and Joe Yannarely. Thanks for your work on this project gentlemen.

Complaint System Changes

Pat McGinn and intern Peter Smith have been working with the information and complaint staff to improve the functioning of the overall complaint system. Pat and her staff are ready to roll out the changes next month with the help of Don Cheney and Paul Hogrefe. Once the changes are implemented in "the AMANDA development system" we will have department wide training before we move the changes into AMANDA production. The purpose of these changes is to clarify the status of every complaint for the City Council and all the external users of the complaint system. Thanks to Pat, Peter, and the rest of the staff for taking on this important improvement project.

Thanks for your continued support as we work to make DSI a reality.

Bob